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ROBERT FOWLE.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are a great many boys who stand at the Boston market, with baskets in their hands, to carry home meat for gentlemen who come to buy. Many of them are dirty and ragged. Some of them are bad boys, who spend much of their time in wicked play, and use wicked language. They sometimes steal and lie; and they are so noisy as to be very troublesome to the people in the market.

One day Mr. Jones came to buy some beef; and a crowd of these boys ran up to him crying out, "Shall I carry it for you, Sir?" "Do let me take it, Sir." "I spoke first, Sir." Mr. Jones told them, that he did not want them; and then said to the market man, that he would send for the meat presently. He was just turning away, when a little boy said to him, "Please let me carry it home for

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This little book was originally written by a parent for the entertainment and instruction of his son, and is published at the request of a few friends, who thought it might not be unacceptable to other children. To them it is inscribed.

FOURTH EDITION.

C

you, Sir." He spoke so modestly and softly, that Mr. Jones stopped to look at him. He was not like most of the other boys, ragged and dirty; but his clothes were all whole, and his face and hands were clean. He had no hat on, and no shoes; so that he seemed to be very poor, though he was so very neat.

Mr. Jones was pleased to see this, for he thought that he must be a good boy, and that his mother must be a good woman. He asked the market man if he knew him.

"No, Sir," he answered, "I never saw him before in my life."

"I never was here before," said the boy.

"And how came you here now," said Mr. Jones.

"My mother sent me here. She is sick and cannot work, and has no money to buy any food, and so she sent me here to try to earn some. And if I cannot get any, my mother will not get well, and I shall not have any thing to eat."

Mr. Jones put the meat into his basket, and told him to carry it to Washington Place, on Fort Hill. The boy did not know the way; and Mr. Jones said that as he was going home, he might follow him.

When they got to the house, and the boy had carried his load round to the kitchen, Mr. Jones called him into the parlor, and asked him his name. He said that his name was Robert Fowle.

"Where do you live?" asked Mr. Jones.

"In White-Bread Alley, close by Mr. Parkman's Meeting-house," said Robert.

"What is your father's business?"

"I have no father," said Robert; "he died two years ago."

"And what does your mother do?"

"She takes in washing and sewing, and does any thing she can. But she is sick now, and can do nothing. So I am obliged to stay away from school to help her, or else we should all starve."

"How many of you are there?" said Mr. Jones.

"There are five besides me, and they are all girls, and I am the oldest, and I am but twelve."

"And have you no relations, nor friends, to help you?"

"No, Sir," said Robert; "all our relations live a great way off, and we have not been long enough in Boston to know many folks here. So mother has to do all when she's well, and now she's sick there's nobody but I."

Mr. Jones pitied the poor woman, and resolved to help her. He gave Robert some money, and promised to employ him every day, if he behaved well. He determined also to find something more for him to do.

CHAPTER II.

Robert hastened home to his mother. She was sitting by the fire, mending a child's gown, and

looking very pale and sick. The children were standing round her, cold and hungry, and little Anne was crying because she had nothing to eat.

Robert was very glad that he had some money to buy bread, and as soon as he opened the door, he held it up in his hand, and said, "See, mother, only see what a good gentleman it was; see how much he gave me. Don't cry, Anne, for now we shall have enough. And he said it was because you was sick, and he knew you was a good mother, because I looked and spoke so nice. And he said, we must all take care and be good children."

Mrs. Fowle told Robert not to talk now, but to run and buy some bread. Little children who always have enough to eat, do not know how glad these little hungry creatures were to see the loaf that he brought home.

While they were busily and heartily eating, Robert told them all that he had done that morning, and that Mr. Jones had promised to give him something more to do.

He then went to school in the afternoon, for he loved his books, and his mother would not suffer him to neglect them. The poorest boys in Boston can attend the public schools, and Mrs. Fowle knew that children cannot be happy nor good, if they do not learn to read and write.

The next morning Robert washed himself, and washed and fed the smaller children, and took his

basket to go out. "Good-bye, mother, good-bye, children."

"Robert, stop one minute," said his mother. "Do you know any of the boys in the market?"

"No, mother, not one," said Robert.

"Well, my dear son," said she, "I hope you will not play with them, nor have any more to do with them than is absolutely necessary. For I hear that some of them are bad boys, and do not speak the truth, and say wicked words."

"Yes, mother," said Robert, "and they fight. I saw them. And they swear terribly. And they were very saucy to some gentlemen."

"I hope you will not learn to do so, Robert. You had better starve, than learn to be wicked. It would break my heart to have you a bad boy. Be very careful, then, Robert; and if they try to draw you away, do not go with them. Remember what I say, and remember your dear father. Remember what the Bible says, too."

Robert promised that he would be careful, and ran off to the market. Mr. Jones did as he had said, and Robert found enough to do to keep him busy, day after day, and to buy many comfortable things for his mother. He carried all his money to her, and would not spend any of it for apples or cakes, like other boys. He behaved so well, that many gentlemen always wanted Robert Fowle to carry home their marketing; and one gave him a hat, and another a pair of shoes, and so made him more comfortable and happy.

CHAPTER III.

When the boys found that Robert had more errands at the market than any of them, some of them were very angry. They said that he was a new boy and had no business there, and that he had come to get away their money. He would not pitch cents with them, nor play at any game in which they could get away his money; and so they called him mean and stingy. He would not keep company with them, nor hear bad stories; and they called him proud. And because he looked cleaner and more neat than they, they gave him the name of the *little gentleman*, and sometimes the *white-bread gentleman*. In this way they teased him, and tried to make him unhappy. But he minded it as little as he could, for he knew that he was doing right. Yet he often felt grieved, and was glad when the time came for him to go home, and be with his mother and sisters.

"O mother," said he one day, when he came home to dinner, "how glad I shall be when I have done going to market."

"Why, my dear?" said his mother.

"Because the boys plague me so," said Robert; and he told her how they treated him, and what names they called him.

"But is it not partly your fault, Robert? Perhaps you tease *them*, and are not obliging, and love to seem better than they."

"O no, mamma," cried out his oldest sister, Mary, who was ten years, "I am sure it can't be so; for Robert is always obliging, and never teases anybody."

"I try to be, I am sure," said Robert. "But you know you told me not to play with them, because they do not behave well."

"But you must treat them well," answered his mother, "and be kind to them. Always do to them as you would have them do to you. You know where that rule is?"

"Yes, mother, in the New Testament."

"If you always act according to this rule, by and by they will be ashamed to tease you, for they will see that you mean them no harm. Besides, if you knew how they came to be such bad boys, you would think them to be pitied."

"How is it, mother?"

"Because they were never taught better, as you were. Some of them had no kind father like yours, to take care of them; and some of them have parents who drink and quarrel, and never teach them any thing, nor send them to school. We should therefore pity them as well as blame them, and try to make them better. For if you had been brought up as they were, perhaps you would have been like them."

"I will remember what you say," said Robert; "but still, I wish I had done going where they are."

His mother told him that she hoped to be so well in a few days, as to work again, and then he would go to market no longer.

The next day Robert had an opportunity of practising on his mother's advice. A boy by the name of John Saunders asked him to help carry a large basket to Bowdoin square; and though it was very inconvenient to him, yet Robert was so obliging as to go; and John said he was the cleverest of all, for none of the others would go. Ned Field wanted to use his little basket while he was gone, because his own was not very clean. Robert gave him leave, but begged him not to let it get dirty.

"Don't be afraid," said Ned; "I shan't hurt your nicety."

But when Robert came back, he found his basket very dirty, and the handle broken.

"O Ned, how could you do this," cried Robert.

Ned only laughed, and the other boys joined him.

"I should think you might do as you would be done by," said Robert, very quietly, and began to walk away. Ned knew that he had done wrong, and therefore he flew into a passion, as people often do, that they may seem to think themselves right.

"What's that you say?" he cried. "None of your impudence, Mr. Gentleman. None of your mother's goody talk, Mr. white bread clean face."

"I don't know why you should be angry," said Robert, "nor what harm there is in a clean face.

And I'm sure if you had been used to my mother's good lessons, you would love them."

"Do you say my mother is not as good as yours?" cried Ned; and he lifted up his hand, and struck him twice so as almost to knock him down.

"A fight, a fight," cried the wicked boys clapping their hands; and they tried to make Robert return the blow. But Robert knew it was wrong to fight, and therefore stood still, astonished though not afraid.

"He's afraid," cried the boys; "Coward! Coward!"

"I am not afraid," said Robert.

"Why don't you fight then?" said they.

"Because it's wrong to fight at any time," said Robert; "and I believe I did not do right in what I said just now; and it certainly will not make it right to fight about it."

The boys shouted, and hissed, and said it was mean spirited to take back his words for a blow.

"Not for a blow," said Robert, "but because they were wrong. And I think it would be very mean, if I should say to Ned what was wrong, and try to flog him too."

"That's a noble fellow," said a man that was standing by. "Live up to that, my lad; it's the true spirit. Ned, you ought to take example. It's you that are to blame."

Ned knew this, but he was sullen and obstinate, and went away without speaking.

CHAPTER IV.

The next day, when Mr. Jones came to market, he asked Robert how his basket came to be broken. A man who stood near, the same who had spoken so kindly to Robert the day before, began to tell the whole story; and Robert soon took up his basket, with the meat which Mr. Jones had been buying, and went away. Mr. Jones had listened very attentively to the man's story, and when it was done, turned round to take up the change which the market-man had laid down for him on the bench. But there was a silver half-dollar missing. Mr. Jones said he had seen the man put it there, but now it was gone. Perhaps it had rolled off on to the floor. No, they searched for it, and it was not to be found. Then somebody must have taken it. Who could it be? "Perhaps it was Robert," said the man; "he stood round that side."

"Robert!" said Mr. Jones; "where is he?"

"O! he went off long ago," said one of the boys.

"That's the reason he would not stay and hear the story through," said another.

"Ay, ay," said another; "I wondered what made him in such a hurry. It's plain enough now."

"Yes," said another, "the white little gentleman wanted to buy him a new clean shirt, I suppose."

In this way they all talked loud, and called him

many hard names. Nobody spoke for him but John Saunders; and he said he did not think it likely so obliging a boy would steal.

Mr. Jones did not know what to think. He set out to meet Robert as he should come back. But Robert had taken another street. Mr. Jones returned to the market, thinking to find him there. But Robert did not come back again that forenoon.

Every body was now certain that he had taken the half-dollar; and Ned Field, who had been of an errand, coming up, declared that he saw the sly little gentleman take it.

"Why did not you tell of it?" asked Mr. Jones.

Ned answered, that he did it with such an innocent look, that he thought it was something Mr. Jones gave him for being so good a boy.

"But why did you not mention it afterwards, when we were talking about it?" said Mr. Jones.

"I did not hear any talk about it," said Ned; "for a gentleman called me away to wait on him, and I have but just got back."

This was true; and Mr. Jones began to think, as every body else thought, that Robert was a thief. This grieved him very much, and he walked away with a heavy heart to Mrs. Fowle's house. What a pity, he thought, that so well behaved a boy should be dishonest! What grief it will be to his mother!

CHAPTER V.

Mrs. Fowle was very much shocked and astonished, when she heard that her son was accused of dishonesty, and she said that she could not believe it. Robert declared that he was innocent, and that he never should think of doing so wicked a thing; and when Mr. Jones told him, that Ned Field said he saw him take the half-dollar, he burst out a crying, and said, "O what a wicked boy to tell such a cruel lie!"

"But if you did not take it," said Mr. Jones, "what made you run away so suddenly?"

"I did not run away, sir," said Robert, "but you were all talking about me, and I did not feel right to stand by and listen, so I took my basket and went away."

"But what made you go home so slyly, through the other street?"

"Because it was nearer, and I was in a hurry."

"What made you in a hurry?" asked Mr. Jones.

"Nothing in particular," said Robert, "but I had done all my errands, and I always like to be at home as soon as possible."

"Did your mother want you?"

"No, sir," said Robert.

"Was it not a great deal sooner than you commonly come home?" said Mr. Jones.

"Yes, sir," said Robert.

"Ah, Robert," said Mr. Jones, "that is all very much against you."

His mother thought so too. But Robert still protested most earnestly that he was innocent.

"I must search your pockets," said Mr. Jones.

Robert burst out a crying again, and said, "Indeed, indeed, it is not there."

Mr. Jones made him empty his pockets, and there were two silver half-dollars there. His mother lifted up her hands and cried out, "O Robert, how came you by them?"

"I came by them honestly, mother," he answered, drying his eyes; "but I did not mean you should know I had them; because I wanted to surprise you by and by. The way I did was this. Sometimes a gentleman would pay me more than enough; and I always laid that by, till I got enough to make half a dollar, and then I changed it for this."

"Who changed it for you?" asked Mr. Jones.

Robert said he could not tell, for it was in a shop as he came home one day, and he did not mind where it was.

Mr. Jones shook his head, and did not believe him. He asked him how he came by the other.

"You gave it to me yourself, sir, three weeks ago."

"Yes, I remember," said Mr. Jones; "but this one I think you stole. Every thing you say is very unlikely; and besides, Ned saw you."

Mr. Jones then said, that he should consider what ought to be done to such a boy, and went away.

Robert and his mother sat for some time, full of sorrow, but without saying a word. By and by Robert spoke out, "O, how glad I am that there is a God! for now there is one that knows I am innocent. My mother thinks I am a thief, and Mr. Jones thinks so, and every body thinks so. But God knows every thing, and he knows I am not. Every body else hates me, but God loves me just as well as ever."

"And if you are innocent, my son," said his mother, "trust him, and he will make your innocence appear."

"He knows, too, what a lie Ned Field told," continued Robert. "O, how dreadfully he must feel, to know that God heard him."

Robert's father and mother had taught him to think much of God, and she was pleased to find that he thought of him now. It made her feel a strong hope that his innocence would be cleared up; but she did not say any thing. She thought it best in all trouble quietly to wait. She was sure that all would be well at last, for she always found that every dark side had its bright side, and that it is never right to despair, or be overcome by trouble.

"O HOW GLAD I AM THAT THERE IS A GOD!"

CHAPTER VI.

Robert could not go to the market the next day, because every body thought him a thief. He therefore went to school. But the boys looked hardly at him, and avoided him. It was very hard to bear this, and he burst into tears, and could not pursue his studies. The master saw that something troubled him, and kindly told him that he might go home.

Robert went out, scarcely knowing where he went, till he came to the water side, where some boys were playing on the ice. One of them broke through. The rest were frightened, and instead of helping him began to run away. Robert called to them, and begged them to help the boy out. But they were so frightened, that they could do nothing. Robert got a long pole, and slid it along on the ice, till the end of it reached the boy. He called to him to take hold of the pole and raise himself by it, and in that way the ice would bear him. Robert held the other end, and by great exertions the boy got out safe. It was Ned Field.

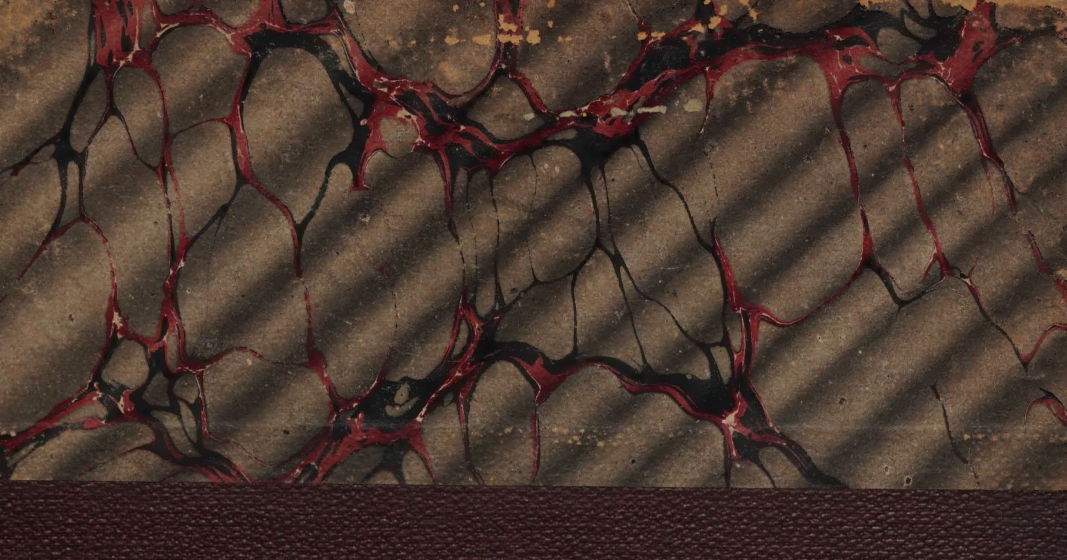
"O Robert," said he, "if it had not been for you I should have been drowned."

Ned was so chilled by being long in the cold water, that he was obliged to be carried into a house and put to bed. He was very sick. But when Robert was going away he called him back, and said, "O Robert, you have saved my life, and yet how

wicked I have been to you. I thought you was stingy and proud, and so I hated you, and tried to tease you. I spoiled your basket on purpose to plague you, and said you stole the half dollar when I stole it myself. And now you have saved my life!"

Robert went home with a lighter heart, and told his mother what had happened, and what Ned had said. She told him to observe how God punished the wicked boy, and how unhappy he now must be. "But perhaps he will be the better for it as long as he lives," she said.

"I dare say he will," said Robert. And as long as Ned was sick, he every day went to see him, and did kind things for him; so that Ned came at last to love him very much. He told every body that Robert was innocent, and for that every body was glad; for all who knew him loved him. They also forgave Ned, because he was penitent; and when he got well, he was ever after a better boy.

Mr. Jones came to see Robert, and shook him heartily by the hand, and promised to do something which should reward him for his sufferings. He kept his promise; and Robert grew to be a very respectable and excellent man. And as long as he lived, he never forgot the lesson he had learned; to trust Providence even in the darkest hour, and to be always obliging and kind.

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